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**COMPARISON AND INTEGRATION AMONG DIFFERENT SOURCES FOR
DETERMINING THE LEGAL FOREIGN POPULATION STOCK IN ITALY.**

Submitted by ISTAT *

1. The availability of various sources – administrative and statistical – for determining the stock of immigrants living in Italy provides a wide variety of information, but represents at the same time a challenge for the official statistics; the task is to supply a clear answer to the ever more extensive needs of information on foreign immigration and, therefore, to succeed in finding an efficient synthesis of the data from different sources that describes the same phenomenon from various aspects. In this paper, starting from definitions of foreign population adopted in Italian surveys, we will focus on how to improve the comparability of existing stock data and sources, in order to meet the new needs of statistical information on migration.

I. Definitions

2. One of the main determinants of the quality and international comparability of statistical data on immigration depends on definitions of immigrant population itself.

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3. The definition of immigrant population adopted in Italy according to the available statistical sources has been until now exclusively based on the criterion of *citizenship*, except for the census. This criterion can be accepted in a first phase – which up to the present has substantially interested Italy – when the majority of immigrants keeps their own citizenship for a long period, but becomes more inadequate over time as Italian citizens with a foreign background as well as children born from foreign parents, the so-called second generation of immigrants, are increasing.

4. Using the existing current surveys on stocks it is not possible to count people who obtain Italian citizenship by naturalization – either born in Italy or abroad – and people with one foreign parent and one Italian parent, who are Italian citizens – either born in Italy or abroad.

5. Flow data show an increasing number of acquisitions of Italian citizenship (tab. 1), due - in the majority of cases - to marriages between foreigners, especially women, and Italians, but a growing number of people who obtain Italian citizenship after ten years of continuative residence in the country is observed too¹. Another emerging issue is that of children with parents of different citizenship, one Italian and one foreign, which are Italians at birth, and which can be indirectly considered an indication on the level of integration of foreign communities. Children with only one foreign parent represent a significant quota of the whole number of births recorded in Italy every year, which is moreover rapidly increasing: in 1992 they were about 7.000 (1,3% of the total number of births), while in 2002 they were 13.500 (2,5%).

Table 1 – Acquisitions of Italian citizenship (1994-2003)

Years	Acquisitions of Italian citizenship	% marriage
1994	6.615	90,9
1995	7.445	86,0
1996	8.823	92,1
1997	9.789	87,6
1998	12.016	90,8
1999	11.335	84,8
2000	9.563	85,0
2001	10.382	89,5
2002	10.685	91,2
2003	13.406	84,2

Source: Ministry of the Interior

6. Even more dynamic is the recent growth of children born in Italy from foreign resident parents (tab. 2), that in the majority of cases contribute to the increase of the quota of second generation of immigrants.

7. Without any information on birthplace - which is not available in stock data, with the exception of the census - it is not possible to identify those foreigners who are born in Italy, who are considered immigrants just as all the others, thereby not taking into consideration the peculiarities of the integration and socialisation patterns of persons born in Italy from immigrant parents compared to that of who arrived to Italy as an adult. Moreover, foreign citizens who are born in Italy and who reside there until 18 years of age have the right to obtain Italian citizenship.

¹ According to the current legislation, Italian citizenship can be acquired by naturalization, after ten years of continuative regular residence in the country, or after three years in case of marriage with an Italian citizen; resident spouses can obtain Italian citizenship after six months.

Table 2 – Births of foreign resident in Italy (1993-2002)

Years	Births of foreign resident	% foreigners
1993	7.000	1,3
1994	8.028	1,5
1995	9.061	1,7
1996	10.820	2,0
1997	13.569	2,5
1998	16.901	3,2
1999	21.186	3,9
2000	25.916	4,8
2001	29.156	5,5
2002	32.558	6,1

Sources: ISTAT- Survey on municipal population registries (1993-2000);
ISTAT - Survey on births of resident population (2001-2002).

8. Introducing the element of birthplace would improve the analysis by providing additional informative details, even though, to have a more complete identification of immigrants of second generation, it would be preferable to analyse also the citizenship at birth of the immigrant's parents, which the sources currently available do not enable to do.

II. Sources for determining the stock

9. There are currently three sources available for determining the stock of foreigners living in Italy: the survey on municipal population registries; the population Census; the residence permits. These data have different objectives and application frameworks but on each one it's necessary to work in an integrated way in order to correct possible weak points of each source and take advantage of their strength points.

10. The *survey on municipal population registries (Anagrafi)* is carried out by Istat starting from the beginning of the '90s; respondents are all the 8.100 Italian municipalities. The aim of the survey is to collect information on stock data at the beginning and at the end of the reference year, for the whole population and for the minors' component. Flow data on demographic balance (births, deaths, immigrants, emigrants) area also collected as well as the distribution by single citizenship at the end of the year. Data are normally available after six/seven months from the reference time, with the exception of particular periods, as it was the case after the census.

11. The necessary condition to apply to the registries - for everyone who intends to do it, both Italians and foreigners – is to live stably in the commune, considered as the place of usual residence; in addition, extra-EU citizens must have a valid permit of stay. It is not clearly specified in the current legislation whether all permits allow the application to the registry or there is a minimum length of the document. According to some interpretation, permits whose duration is less than one year, even if perfectly valid, do not express the intention to settle for a long period of time in the municipality. Making the minimum length of the permit explicit it is important also in order to be able to fully comply with the UN recommendations on the definition of "long term migrants", identified as those who intend to reside in the host country for at least one year.

12. Actually, especially in great municipalities, population registries are not updated with sufficient regularity: for this reason, in the registries it is possible to find foreign citizens who do

not possess the requirements to be considered as “residents” – either because they do not live stably in the municipality territory or because they do not have a valid permit anymore. To check and update frequently municipal data on resident population is particularly important for foreigners, whose residential mobility is normally higher than that of Italians. Missed de-registrations are probably one of the main limits of the correctness of statistical data from this source.

13. In terms of stock data, no information on place of birth is available with this source, even if, as said above, it provides also the number of foreign births every year. *Population census* collects every ten years a large number of information on foreign resident population, and also on present foreigners.

14. Census data provide more details necessary for the classification used for studying the immigrants, as they enable to know the citizenship at birth, the citizenship when the survey is being carried out and their birthplace. The combination of these elements makes it possible to categorize the *foreigners* and the *immigrants*, identifying the first ones according to the criterion of citizenship and the second ones according also to their birthplace.

15. The foreign population includes all the persons, born in Italy or abroad, who declared a citizenship other than the Italian one at the census and is thus in line with the definition adopted in the administrative surveys carried out in Italy. On the other hand, the immigrant population includes all the persons born abroad who declared to be foreigner or Italian by naturalization at the census; all foreigners born in Italy, as children born from foreign parents, are therefore excluded from immigrant population. These two populations, foreigner and immigrant, only coincide partly: not all immigrants are foreign citizens (some are Italian by naturalization) and vice versa, not all foreigners are immigrants (some are born in Italy). The 2001 census counted 1,335 thousand foreigners and 1,447 thousand immigrants.

16. Census data can be biased mainly because of under coverage problems; to a certain extent, problems can also derive from the inclusion of foreigners in present or in the resident population. In 2001 in fact, respondents could compile the questionnaire as a resident not only if already in the registries but also in the case of self-declared possession of the necessary requirements; a certain number of foreigners declared themselves as residents even without a regular permit, and it took some time to check and correct these situations, excluding irregular positions.

17. *Residence permits* are granted by “*Questura*”, provincial bodies of Police Department of the Ministry of Interior and provided to Istat, which, for years, has been disseminating a series statistically correct relatively to the stock, at the end of each year. Data are collected at provincial level according to the *Questura* that granted the documents and not to the place of actual residence of foreigners, who obviously can move over the territory and decide to apply to the population register in another province. Anyway, residence permits give the right but do not oblige to the application to population registers: it is possible to live regularly in Italy without being “residents”.

18. Data are also disseminated by the Ministry itself, but without all the preliminary statistical adjustments operated by Istat. At the beginning of the ‘90s the two series, that of the Ministry and that of Istat, were greatly divergent, because of the high number of expired documents, which were still present in the ministerial data. Due also to the solicitations coming from Istat, during the years, accuracy of data published by the Ministry has increased, and today in their registries

no expired documents are present anymore. In order to obtain reliable statistical data, one of the main difficulties is linked to the long period of time which is necessary for the renewal of permits and for their registration in the electronic ministerial archives, which are later processed by Istat.

19. It is possible that expired documents – that are excluded from the Ministry registry – are actually under examination by relevant authorities in order to be renewed. The renewal process of expired documents can take many months, especially when flows of immigrants from abroad are particularly consistent, for example in the occasion of recent regularization provisions.

20. Taking this into account, Istat processes data with some months of delay from the reference period, normally the end of the year, including in the final estimate all the people who were regularly present² but whose permits were expired at that date. Unfortunately, this is a phenomenon which does not have a regular development over time, due to extraordinary events that can contribute to the increasing of immigration flows. Moreover, during the last decade the impact of regularization provisions on the series of permits has been substantial, which subsequently lead to a great variability in the quota of documents that appear in the Ministry registries with a certain delay.

21. Moreover, according to Italian laws, minors under the age of 14 can be only indicated on the permit of the adult who declares them under his or her own responsibility, but have no personal permit, with the exception of specific cases, like adoption and custody.

22. Place of birth is recorded in the document but this information does not seem to be particularly useful to study the second generation of immigrants, because of the almost total absence of minors, who are still the great majority of foreigners born in Italy.

23. Even with the problematic timing in the dissemination of data and the exclusion of minors, data on residence permits are a precious source to study the stock of immigrants. Data enable to have access to a wide variety of information: besides the main demographic characteristics of the foreigners who have a permit, each document indicates also the reason of stay in Italy, which makes it possible to monitor the evolution process of the immigrant presence, in addition to all the quantitative variations of the foreign population. Over the years, for example, the quota of permits released due to family reasons considerably grew, going from a first phase wherein the protagonists of immigration towards Italy were exclusively young workers who had left their own family in their country of origin, to a more “mature” phase in which the family nucleuses are recomposed or even formed in Italy.

III. Procedures to estimate the legal foreign population stock

24. The estimate of the resident foreign population is based on the comparison between population registries and the census and is carried out every ten years. This quantitative comparison should result in the data from these two sources being lined up, thanks to a reciprocal control and correction: the census photographs the situation every ten years and contributes at highlighting “irregular” positions left erroneously in the municipalities registries (which typically refer to foreign citizens who have moved their own residence abroad, maybe by going back to their country of origin, without communicating it to the municipality); at the same time, the registry data represent a reference benchmark for the census, which often suffers of under coverage problems.

² Foreigners waiting for the renewal of their residence permit must be considered as regularly present.

Tab. 3 – Resident foreign population in Italy, according to Census and to population registries, October 2001.

Regions	Census	Population registries-oct 2001	Difference %
North West	468.546	546.400	-14,2
North East	356.975	377.430	-5,4
Centre	333.203	453.186	-26,5
South	116.011	149.209	-22,2
Islands	60.154	84.382	-28,7
ITALY	1.334.889	1.610.607	-17,1
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"Grandi Comuni"	379.675	557.039	-31,8

Source: ISTAT

25. Differences between population registries and census – due both to over enumeration of *Anagrafi* and to under coverage problems at census – are not homogenous over the territory. In general, in the central and southern regions the divergence is higher than in the north. From table n. 3 it is also evident that the greater part of the difference is concentrated in the “*Grandi Comuni*”, which are the municipalities with more than 150 thousand inhabitants, where the difference among the two sources is equal to 31,8%, much higher than the average value at national level (17,1%).

26. The stock of foreigners counted at the census is lower in particular for those groups of citizenships which arrived in Italy in the very first phase of immigration, at the beginning of the ‘80s, such as Somalia and Eritrea – both more than “halved” at the census – Egypt, Cape Verde and Iran. In such cases the lower level at census can be considered close to reality, and the over enumeration of population registries at the end of 2001 is probably due to missed de-registrations of people who actually left Italy over the years.

27. On the other side there are some national groups that were more numerous at the census than in the population registries, such as Argentina, Venezuela and Switzerland, all countries where traditionally Italians used to emigrate. A possible explanation can be linked in these cases to the erroneous self declaration of citizenship of respondents, to a large extent represented by Italian citizens who recently repatriated after many years abroad.

28. For the foreign population as a whole, differences among census and registries vary a lot according to gender: at national level, foreign men resident at census are 23,7% less numerous than in the *Anagrafi*, while for women the difference is 9,5%.

29. After the census, in each municipality, those in charge for population registries must compare their data with census results, in order to verify, for every discrepancy, which source must be corrected. These interventions, which of course are more complicated in large communes, should normally be completed in the first 2/3 post-census years; at the end of 2003 some divergences still persist between registries data and resident population updated from the census. In case no registry revision has been carried out, two strongly divergent populations will emerge, one that results from the census and the other from the population archives.

Tab. 4 - Foreign resident population in Italy, according to population registries and Census, October 2001 and December 2003

Reference period	Source	Foreign resident population
21/10/2001	Census	1.334.889
	Population registries	1.610.607
31/12/2003	Population updated from census data	1.990.159
	Population registries	2.135.032

Source: ISTAT

30. In many municipalities the updating of registries was done timely and carefully: in 2002 and 2003 about 50 thousand foreign citizens not counted at census but actually living in Italy were included again in the registries, while about 25 thousand people, erroneously counted as resident at the census, were cancelled. These operations concurred to improve the quality of registers data even if, as already pointed out, at the end of 2003 there are still wide differences between population updated from census and registries; at a national level, divergence among the two source has reduced from 17,1% at the census date to 6,8% at the end of 2003.

31. Quality and timeliness of the data on the stock of residents suffer thereby from numerous problems, deriving both from the administrative nature of the registry source, and from the complexity of the whole estimation system, which results not easily applicable, especially in large cities.

32. However, the integration between the data from the population registries and the residence permits enables to reach a reliable estimate either of residents or of foreigners legally present in Italy.

33. The estimation of resident population through the comparison between the number of valid permits and foreign residents represent a useful exercise in those municipalities where there is still a great discrepancy among registries and census. In fact, in some cases, even quite important in terms of demographic relevance, population calculated updating census data at the end of 2003 is still much smaller not only than registries but also than the number of valid permits owned by foreigners who declare to live in that municipality³ and who own a permit for work or family. Using the residence permits data, selected by some principal reasons to stay, could represent a possible aid to the solution of the problematic calculation of foreign population in the *Grandi Comuni*, where comparison between census and registry has not yet been completed and where discrepancies between the two data are still relevant. Residence permit data could be used as a benchmark level to estimate a *statistical* population more in line with the reality.

34. More generally, residence permits are normally used to estimate the whole foreign population legally living in Italy. Assuming that almost all the minors are registered as residents (which is a condition linked to the concept of stability, typical of families) it is possible to sum up people with a valid residence permit to minors residents to obtain the estimate. At the end of 2003 for example, foreign population living in Italy was calculated to be around 2.500 thousand people; the difference is particularly high at this date due to the fact that the majority of those

³ On the residence permit there is the information on the address of domicile.

who obtained a permit under the regularization have not yet applied to registries, even if not all of them will decide to do so.

Tab. 5 - Foreign resident population in Italy according to population registries and residence permits, December 2003

Regions	Population updated from census data	Residence permits	Differences %
North			
West	707.664	731.851	3,3
North			
East	545.394	536.972	-1,6
Centre	483.233	614.555	21,4
South	176.597	230.534	23,4
Island	77.271	80.087	3,5
ITALY	1.990.159	2.193.999	9,3

Source: ISTAT and Ministry of the Interior

IV. Perspectives

35. The data surveyed by means of the source examined, even though based on surveys that are almost exclusively of administrative nature and limited to the legal foreign population only, offer a large viewpoint, even on a territorial level, of the foreign population that lives and resides in Italy. By bringing some improvements to the current surveys it would also be possible to analyse data on resident population with an immigrant background, which contributes to a significant extent to the increase of the total resident population and in the next future will be one of the main new topic of migration policies. As said above, by examining the birthplace, which is a piece of information existing in the registry, and the citizenship at birth, which at the moment is not recorded, it would be possible to identify with greater detail the different components of immigrant population.

36. Further developments can derive from the improvements in the collection and dissemination of data on different typologies of sub-populations. One of the main demands, which at the moment are not yet completely covered by available statistics regards foreign participation to the labour market. Possible sources are, also in this case numerous and rich, and to take advantage of their potentialities is surely one of the more urgent matter for the near future.
